

COLONIALISM AND DEVELOPMENT: REINVENTING 'TRADITION' AND
GENDERED WORK IN KUMAON, INDIA

By

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The forests of the Kumaon Himalayas in northern India contain a wide variety of living materials essential to the subsistence production of the people. Women and men alike have a strong sense of history connecting them to the forests and the life it provides. However, during colonial times women took on the bulk of the work associated with gathering and maintaining these forests while their male counterparts were forced out of the villages to earn an income in the cities. Over time, women adjusted to male members of the family being gone by taking on large, burdensome workloads to maintain the household. This reformation of the division of labor became the new "tradition" the villagers lived by. As women did this survival work, they also created a community and network of support for each other while they worked together to gather fuel, fodder, food and even medicine from the forest areas. The women preserved and passed down knowledge through oral traditions, giving them a complete and highly accurate understanding of how to maintain the forestland. However, social structures of a male-dominated society have kept women, and particularly their knowledge, out of the public

realm. Though women could be helpful to policy formation, their participation and presence is rendered invisible through a series of cultural barriers (i.e. time constraints, gender-segregated society, male dominated families, etc). This research considers the effects of current development projects in Kumaoni culture, particularly as they affect women. Development discourse is addressed in relation to projects and the allocation of resources relating to both developing areas and women. By examining women's work, knowledge and participation in community activities, I examine issues regarding the outcomes of British colonial rule, the breadth of wisdom which is unused and dismissed by cultural norms, and the extent to which women's "traditional" work is hampered by public policies.

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Introduction

As Kumaoni men head out for a day of work, allowing them to earn an income for their family, their wives, daughters and sisters are up with the sun preparing the morning meal and getting ready to make their way to nearby forests to gather the daily necessities for their households. Spending the majority of their day in the forests, women work together to gather wood, fodder, food and medicine when needed. Once they have gathered the variety of forest resources that they need and are available, they return to their homes to care for their children, animals and land. Their day is long but these women are working to maintain a livelihood, so their work remains constant. With few other options for survival, the women rely on traditional knowledge and practices learned from elders to perform their daily activities that support their families.

The basic needs for livelihood include a wide variety of resources obtained from the agricultural fields and forests. Though agricultural fields are very important to the livelihood of the people, I focus this research on the resources provided by the forests and the work associated with gathering them. Wood is gathered as fuel for cooking, fodder is required to feed the animals and the various berries and herbs found are used as food and medicine for the people. Because of their forest work, women's role in the community is important as the provider of life for herself and her family. This role as the main provider of daily necessities, however, is not necessarily a historical role that can be linked to traditional Kumaoni culture (Gururani 2002a). In fact, many of the changes are directly associated with colonialism in India.

British colonists that sought their fortune in the exports of trade routes and forest resources have historically influenced places like Kumaon, specifically, and India more

generally. Beginning in the 1600's and intensifying their control throughout the 1800's, colonialism began to alter the social structures that made up traditional India (Coupland 1945). Gender roles in particular became more sharply divided through colonial policies and formal education that altered the ideologies of the people. Men and boys were instructed in the importance of an economic livelihood while women and girls were taught the importance of maintaining the household and being good wives (Gururani 2002a).

With these new ideologies, household work that was traditionally defined by complimentary roles of both men and women became the sole responsibility of women. This shift was supported by colonial practices that forced men out of villages and into the capitalist cultural setting, enforcing the new subsistence strategy of earning an income and buying daily necessities. By the 1980's, men were almost exclusively integrated into an economic livelihood (Mehta, 1996), leaving women with the bulk of household responsibilities. This new gendered division of labor is now interpreted as a "traditional" social organization in Kumaon. It is important to label the new gendered organization as "traditional" because currently development agencies see these practices as actual traditions of the people and base their cultural analyses on these interpretations.

By critically looking at the changes in women's work, and the processes that exaggerated the division of labor in Kumaon, I address the role that development plays in the construction of new social structures. Building on "traditional" practices, contemporary development projects target men as the changing force in Kumaoni culture. However, by altering the lives and working conditions of men, development projects indirectly affect the lives of women (Charlton 1997, Mehta 1996). In the case of

development in Kumaon, the construction of roads and addition of transportation systems allowed men faster and more reliable access to cities and nearby villages. However, the transportation systems are not only used for men's needs, they were additionally used to transport resources between villages. With more resources available, women were pressured to buy their daily necessities instead of gathering them, making their unpaid subsistence work unnecessary and obsolete. Women received other "encouragement" to buy resources because of the forests restrictions that limited local use of the forests in order to establish the importance of forest resources as a commodity (to be discussed in more detail below).

As women are pushed to change their strategies for subsistence production, their daily interactions with each other are also transformed. With forest restrictions causing fewer opportunities to work together, knowledge that is preserved through the oral passage of information and daily interaction with the forests is at risk. Their understanding of forest management and maintenance typically determined the livelihood of the forest through the care they provide. However, with decreased access, women's ability to care for the forest has begun to detract from the forest's livelihood. Non-governmental organizations and social action groups have recognized the importance of women's roles in the maintenance of the forests and have a growing interest in the need to implement women's knowledge into development projects that focus on the reconstruction of forestland. Unfortunately, the traditional, colonial and current ideologies of women's place in society have impacted women's own understanding of how much knowledge they actually have regarding forest reconstruction (Gururani

2002b). Because none of the Kumaoni practices are written down, women believe that the knowledge they have is simply an integral part of their role as women.

The focus of my research is how colonial and developmental institutions affect women's work and "traditional" practices in Kumaon. I approach my topic by analyzing secondary historical, archival, and documentary sources from a number of different disciplinary angles including: sociology, history, women's studies, international studies and anthropology. Each of these disciplines offers a different perspective in determining the various ways that Kumaoni culture has been transformed in recent centuries. By analyzing these different viewpoints, I compile a more comprehensive representation of social and political changes that have occurred in Kumaon.

Kumaoni cultural and social organization coupled with its forest-based livelihood create an excellent example of a region where colonialism and development have affected the traditions of the people through projects and ideological policies. By examining specific periods in Kumaoni history, I reveal the various ways that women's labor has been rendered invisible. Beginning with a brief history of India, I outline the period of colonialism, the struggle for independence, and the post-colonial responses that lead up to the current social and political conditions in all areas of the country. I then focus specifically on the region of Kumaon, which lies in the northern region of India, at the border of Nepal. Following the section on Kumaon, I analyze development as it is present in specific projects in Kumaon and the ways these projects have affected current social and political structures. I end with a final section on gender and work, which highlights the social, political and economic roles of women in Kumaon. By analyzing the different periods in Kumaoni history, I argue that the changes in women's work have

rendered their knowledge invisible and their participation in community decisions inconsequential.

Colonial India: An Historical Perspective

In this section I establish an historical and contextual review of India during the transformative era of British colonialism from the 1600's through India's 1947 Independence. By examining policy changes and social patterns, I argue that the large scale plans of colonialism—to gain resources and export control—greatly affects even the most rural villages like Kumaon.

Prior to colonialism, most of India's peoples survived by way of a subsistence livelihood (Shiva 1989). The construction of their day was based on this way of supporting the family and maintaining health and village relations. Generally speaking, they were able to live off of what was raised, produced, and gathered. The work involved with subsistence living required that everyone, both men and women, have a role in completing the tasks of gathering and field work (Mehta 1996; Shiva 1989). Although both men and women performed complimentary tasks associated with the household and subsistence production, patriarchal social systems left men in charge of most decisions that involved the household. Patriarchy establishes that women "are subordinate not only to all men but also to the more senior women" (Kandiyoti 1997: 89). This social hierarchy is often accepted as the reason why men have authority over women. Therefore, this gender inequality which is so often assumed to be only a result of colonialism, was already present in Indian society prior to colonial times. British colonizers, however, exacerbated the inequality to extreme levels. By implementing their

own understanding of gender status, they lowered women's worth in society, enforcing the ideology that the proper place for a woman was in the home. This new gender ideology changed men's idea of their own place in society, introducing exaggerated inequalities and hierarchical divisions within villages and families. These changes can still be seen today as women have the responsibility in the maintenance of the household tasks.

Despite the final ideological and political outcomes of British colonialism, the British originally entered India in the early 1600's with the preemptive intention of gaining control of the trade systems as well as attaining spices used to preserve meats at a time when refrigeration was not available (Coupland 1945). The goals of British colonists were established through the East India Trading Company, which largely controlled the ports of India. Coupland's historical account notes that the original intent of the British was not to colonize or create an imperialistic government but simply to gain trade routes and supplies to bring back to Britain. In fact, it was not until the 1800's that the British came in control of considerable land in India after battles with both France and Persia. It was at that point that the British realized the little control they had in India had been undermined by the people. This prompted what they saw, as a need to regain that authority. By 1815 the British colonialists established governing powers and began their rule in India (Coupland 1945).

The British saw their new authority and ideas of more advanced living as an opportunity to help the Indians "put things straight" (Coupland 1945:29). The intent to 'straighten' a culture like India's is consistent with our general knowledge of colonialism, which suggests that colonizers typically ethnocentrically saw indigenous societies as

‘backwards’ or ‘behind the times’ (Rostow 2000). In order to revolutionize social and cultural structures, the British did what was common of other colonial governments; they targeted men as the means of change. The focus on men often did not include or even acknowledge the effects any of these changes would have on women. But in fact, current literature about Indian history pinpoints colonialism as a time period in which women’s roles were particularly altered and became more burdensome with regard to housework and maintenance of the household (Gururani 2002a, Shiva 1989).

For the British, implementing new labor conditions and governing power came easily in places like Kumaon. Prior to British rule on land, other groups seeking control of labor and environmental resources already established systems of control. The Gorkha of Nepal, for example, had control of Kumaon from 1790-1815 and during their rule had established practices of *begar*, which was “unpaid, forced, or corvee labor” (Gururani 2002a: 234). Instead of reestablishing order to counter the unjust labor practices of the Gorkha, the British used these *begar* practices to their advantage and removed men from villages, forcing them into labor roles in the cities. In a process of outmigration (Gururani 2002a), men would leave their villages for long periods of time to work for the British in the cities. Though colonial governments assumed their actions would only affect men, indirectly they began a new social system, which altered the gendered labor practices previously in place. By significantly reducing men in the villages, colonists inadvertently established a new division of labor in which women were forced to take on labor roles previously done by men (Charlton 1997). The shift became a consistent part of the culture when *begar* practices were ended in the early 1900’s yet the men did not return to their villages (Gururani 2002a). The prevalence of male outmigration

established this new ‘tradition’ in Indian villages across the country that has continued through present times, solidifying the perspective that household maintenance is the woman’s domain.

In the next section I explore the ways that colonialist perspectives disregarded pre-existing practices like the passing and maintenance of knowledge, already in place in India. I reveal the ways that Britain implemented their authority by forcing the ethnocentric ideology that Indian practices were not adequate and British practices and ideologies were superior.

Colonial Interpretations of Indian Culture

In this section I examine the ways that British Colonialism overlooked cultural consistencies in Indian society and maintained their authority over Indian practices. First, the British upheld a very ethnocentric ideology in viewing the way Indian society should be constructed. They did not make any effort to understand the forms of community in or the strategies of people in India; they simply assumed their own more “advanced technologies” would suit India in the same way they worked for Britain (Shiva 1989). Ellen, Parkes, and Bicker (2000) highlight the second reason that colonizers would have bypassed the effort to understand present conceptual structures in India during the 1800’s: they argue that Indians did not organize their knowledge properly, rather they produced knowledge by consulting other community members who could provide the needed information. The British saw this fluidity in the exchange of knowledge as unstructured and incomprehensible compared to the highly systemized, written, and studied practices they were used to. Particularly in discerning various uses of forestlands,

indigenous practices far exceeded colonial “science” in maintaining the life of the forests. This ‘indigenous knowledge’ was structured as a “folk or embodied knowledge versus a high or systemized knowledge” (Ellen, Parkes and Bicker 2000:82). Indian people generally relied on various cultural and communal ways of understanding and creating knowledge in contrast to the British or Western preference for documented or narrowly conceived scientific knowledge. Indian systems acknowledged the extent to which different people had a better understanding of a particular subject or productive system and that person should be consulted on the subject for more information (Ellen, Parkes, and Bicker 2000). This meant that villagers relied on the experts within the community for specific knowledge in certain areas of information. Systematically, the passing of knowledge through community and village members is also consistent with the way that women use the localized knowledge of their fellow peers to learn about the various resources and uses of forest products (Gururani 2002b). This system establishes the cohesive knowledge maintained by a village and acknowledges the different strengths of the various members in that community.

In addition to the dismissal of indigenous knowledge, British colonists made assumptions about Indian practices instead of creating solutions to the communication barriers. Ellen, Parkes, and Bicker (2000) illustrate how this third way of maintaining authority, by ignoring the cultural and lingual differences, influenced the decision of the British to take a forceful presence rather than trying to learn or understand the existing languages or culture of the Indian people. Even with the example of such a specific region as Kumaon, the languages range from Kumaoni to Hindi to Garhwali (a more localized set of languages). Without making the effort to familiarize themselves with the

many Indian languages, the British failed to incorporate the 'indigenous knowledge' as part of their construction of society. The new practices that were implemented during colonialism were very ethnocentric and imperialistic in their creation revealing how the British were unwilling to learn or accept present traditions as an important part of Indian culture.

The ethnocentric and narrowly conceived understanding is, in part, due to Britain's classification within the Western First World, which contrasted to that of India's Third World classification, creates a hierarchy of worlds (Escobar 1988). The dichotomy between the First and Third World, allowed Britain to maintain their control through perceived superiority. By gaining control of resources, labor, and the environment, colonists spread the ideology that they were culturally superior. Colonial practices and policies became dominant over previously traditional constructions of labor and society. While men were more often directly implicated in the colonial policies regarding labor practices, changes in the social structure and division of labor directly affected women as well.

The changing of traditions left Indian citizens under the impression that their knowledge and cultural practices were not adequate and could be easily altered to fit a Westernized and idealistic society. With the ideology that knowledge is fluid and can be easily revolutionized, colonists forcefully broadened policies and gained control of India. Particularly regarding forestry, Gururani (2002b) explores how changing practices within rural communities affected the relationships between the people and the forests. By restricting locally accessed forests, the people began to lose or forget the information they had gained from their daily work in a particular area. Especially with seasonal practices,

like planting potatoes during the winter (Gururani 2002b), indigenous knowledge was no longer maintained because the people were not able share their knowledge orally or continue their work as normal. These changes in the lives of the people and their ensuing transformation of knowledge and tradition are examples of how colonial policies and control altered Indian people's lives so much, that the result is a current "tradition" that resembles colonial influence more than actual traditional practices.

The next section looks at the movement for Independence in India during the 1900's. In this section, I explore the position and importance of women as national leader Mahatma Gandhi used them for the first time as a resource for gaining independence. In addition, I analyze the contradictory effects of colonialism in women's lives as women both gain rights and lose social status.

The Presence of Women in Political Independence

Patriarchal systems and colonial outmigration contributed to women's diminishing status in Indian culture. The two systems left women with increased burdens of household maintenance as well as the burden of subsistence production. Due to their low standing place in society, women were largely expected to adapt to all new policies and endure the inconveniences that they caused. However, in contrast to this burdensome change in labor conditions, the British Colonial government did create laws that gave women more rights; for example, "Widow remarriage was permitted in 1854, and *sati*, the practice of burning wives along with their deceased husbands, was banned in 1859" (Datta and Kornberg 2002: 79). The addition of these particular women's rights came years after outmigration was first established and used by colonists. The order of these

events creates confusion when analyzing the goals of colonial rulers because women's rights were initially decreased, then later certain rights were implemented in the form of these policy changes.

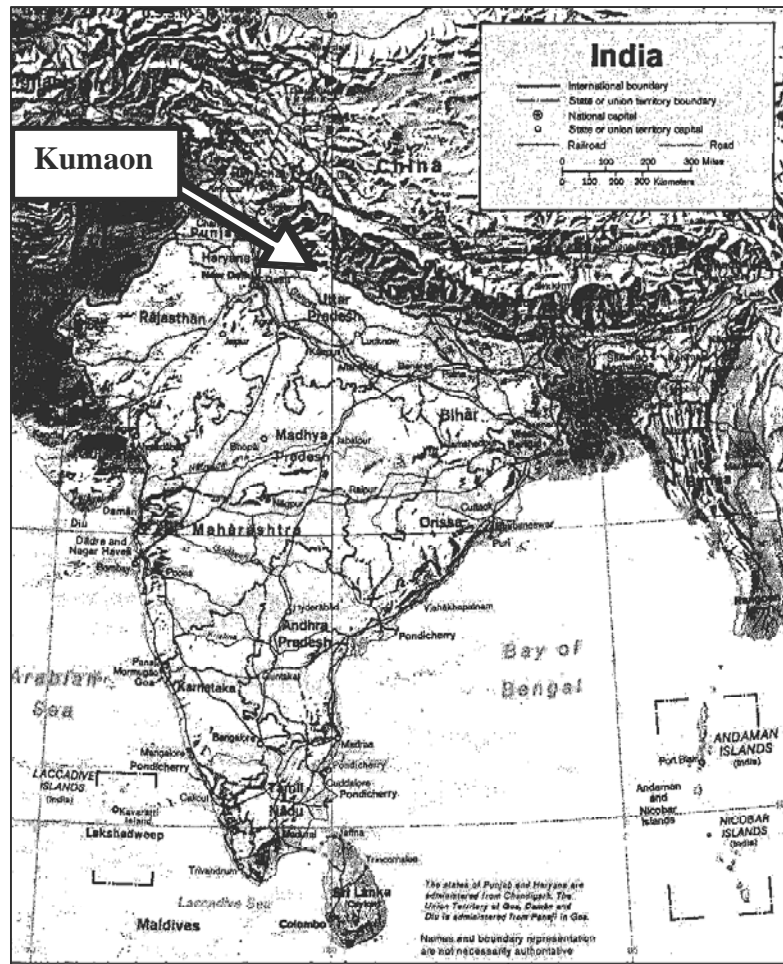
Though policy changes gave women a few more rights, they were still largely invisible in the public eye. Mahatma Gandhi was, in fact, the first national leader to acknowledge the presence and importance of women in the political realm; "Gandhi believed that a nation advances as much as its women do" (Datta and Kornberg 2002: 79). Gandhi's nonviolent tactics as well as his strategic use of women in the movement were new for movements all around the world and made a considerable impact on the culture itself (Datta and Kornberg 2002). This was important for the movement and its growing support, which needed the entire population (men and women together) to have a successful overturning of the British government. India got its Independence in 1947 and a new constitution that acknowledged the importance and presence of women in the Indian society and culture.

However, as Indian people had endured colonialism for close to two hundred years, its influence was still present even after Independence. Gururani's (2002b) study of women's knowledge reveals the extent to which a post-colonial legacy is present in Indian culture despite over fifty years of independence. She argues that Kumaoni traditions were altered and local knowledge was lost during colonial times and has yet to be reestablished. Looking specifically at the effects of the colonial Forest Department, Gururani notes that traditional practices, like planting different vegetables and potatoes in winter months to help the soil rest, came to a complete halt during colonialism. She emphasizes that "it is critical to see knowledge as a process, produced and reproduced

through social relations and not as a set of ahistorical and neutral facts that have remained unchanged” (Gururani 2002b: 320). Because practices have changed and policies have altered the way people live, independence from colonial rule does not mean that traditional practices will begin anew. What she illustrates is that as new systems are implemented, new skills and knowledge are also implemented into the cultural understanding. Therefore, as knowledge is produced and altered in accordance with situations, Indian culture will continue to grow and modify as new systems are implemented and new leaders are in place.

In the next section I address the cultural organization of Kumaon, India. In doing so I explore the lives of Kumaoni people, the role of forests in their lives, and how and why Kumaon has become a target of development.

A Closer Look At Kumaon, India:



Picture courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin

Nestled along the northern region of India, Kumaon is located near the border of Nepal and India. The Himalayan forests that line the region's villages are an integral part of society, providing livelihood, subsistence, and resources. Shiva (1989) emphasizes the importance of the forests as a particularly crucial part of civilization, describing the connection between the forest and community as “distinctive in locating its source of regeneration, material and intellectual” (Shiva 1989: 55). This distinction is provided

because Kumaoni people not only rely on the forests for its resources but also the knowledge acquired from working and living in forestland.

Like many other Indian villages today, the majority of Kumaoni people practice some form of subsistence livelihood, generally in the form of gathering forest resources, agricultural practices and/or animal husbandry. Though the three strategies of livelihood are important to the culture, I focus directly on the practice of gathering forest resources in this research. I acknowledge agricultural practices as well as animal husbandry in accordance with resource gathering but do not analyze either to the same degree as the forest resources.

For many years work was divided in a way that, “women and men participated more or less equally in the various subsistence domain” (Mehta 1996: 192). This division of labor was changed, however, in the 1800’s when colonial governments forced Kumaoni men into wage labor as a way of implementing a more modern form of living (Gupte 2004; Gururani 2002a; Shiva 1989; Upadhyay 2005). This shift in work during and following colonialism is what shapes current ‘traditions’ in Kumaoni culture.

It is important to identify the contemporary “traditions” with quotes because the reality of the people’s situation is that the actual traditions of Indian, and more specifically, Kumaoni people have been altered so much over the years that they no longer resemble the original cultural organizations. In addition, the re-written “traditions” of the people are later interpreted by development agencies (to be discussed in more detail below) as permanent fixtures in indigenous people’s lives. Their projects are then constructed around the “traditional” practices of the given culture instead of the authentic traditions of the culture.

In Kumaon, “traditional” practices have evolved to the point that the women work in the agricultural fields and forests to keep up subsistence aspects of their livelihood while men head out to cities and larger villages for wage labor jobs. The change in labor practices has pushed households to diversify their strategies, combining both subsistence gathering and agricultural production with wage labor. One way that the strategies have been combined within the communities is through cash cropping. This practice, of planting one product and selling the harvest, was not prevalent in Kumaoni households until the 1980’s. Its addition to the subsistence livelihood gave people the opportunity to earn an income off local land. However, most strategies for combining economic and subsistence production required that men migrate to the cities and women remain in the rural villages.

Once most men began to work in cities, there became a gendered “permanence” to the “feminization of agricultural and of natural resource management” (Upadhyay 2005:224). The ‘feminized’ work includes the daily gathering of food, water, wood, and fodder as well as the complimentary tasks that are associated with those resources-- cooking, cleaning, child care, and feeding the animals. These great responsibilities are left for women to carry out while the men are not around; therefore, in a field and forest dependent community like Kumaon, women are most often the ones who are found working in the fields and forests (Gururani 2002a).

There are two aspects of women’s work in forests: gathering necessary resources and implementing those resources in the maintenance and livelihood of the household. In the next section I explore the various resources available in the forests as well as their importance to Kumaoni sustainable livelihood practices.

The Use And Importance of Forest Resources

Kumaoni women have a keen knowledge of forest resources which they have gained through their subsistence work. The variety of forest resources presented by Sontheimer (1991) exhibits a small sense of the extent to which the forests are an integral part of Kumaoni society. Not only are they a part of everyday gathering, the forests provide resources that also construct the culture and life of the people. Because women are the main gatherers of the family, they spend most of their days in the forests, creating a gendered division of work within the everyday labor practices of maintaining the household.

Forest gathering is centered on the natural resources available within the forests. Sontheimer acknowledges that “the leaves, seeds, pods, sap and bark of the trees form part of the diet of many rural people” (1991:68). Along with those resources other trees provide fruit and nuts that are also part of the daily diet in Kumaon. The food alone is very important to the culture and survival of Kumaoni people but, naturally, not the only foods on which they survive.

Forests are also a source of fuel wood gathered to cook food (Gururani 2002a). Though cooking is the main use of the wood, fires are also used to boil drinking water, to heat bath water, to provide light and to smoke meat (Sontheimer 1991). The extensive use of fuel is what makes wood one of the most sought after resources of the area. Unfortunately, forest restrictions established during colonial rule have continued to keep women out of forests that were once in convenient locations (Agarwal 2001). These changes and restrictions affect the hours spent traveling to and from the forests: “A journey to gather firewood and fodder took an hour or two a generation ago—today it

takes a whole day” (Sontheimer 1991: 93). The task of gathering and carrying the fuel is grueling because as the forest restrictions increase, so does the distance of travel involved in reaching the forests. Women’s ability to carry large amounts of fuel then diminishes, as she must endure the weight of the wood for a longer period of time (Sontheimer 1991).

Fuel is a growing problem for rural communities such as Kumaon, because women are not able to gather as much as they would like. Women then face the challenges of having a smaller fire due to the decreased amount of wood. This produces less heat and causes cooking time to either take longer or be cut short, leaving the food uncooked (Sontheimer 1991). The fuel problem is in turn forcing societal and cultural changes in what people eat.

Kumaoni women are also farmers because their work extends to the agricultural fields in addition to other responsibilities. During the various seasons women must plant, care for, and gather the resources grown on family plots of land. The products grown in the fields add to the various foods helping sustain the family livelihood (Mies 1986). Women would grow vegetables in addition to gathering from the nearby fields where wild vegetables grow. Their diverse understanding of what the land provides confirms women’s in depth understanding of the region’s provisions.

For her family, the animals provide an additional number of secondary resources such as income, manure, food, and milk. The assets provided by the animals make them a valuable resource for Kumaoni women and their livelihood. Animal husbandry, as it is referred, requires a complete understanding of animal care and upbringing. In order to feed the animals, women must gather fodder in addition to her own subsistence needs such as gathering wood and food. Fodder provided by the forests is of great seasonal

importance. Generally, animals graze on the grasses in the fields but during the season when the grass dries up or is seeding, another form of food must be provided (Sontheimer 1991). The forests are able to produce fodder because many of the trees in the forests have leaves and nutritious sustenance that are available all year round.

As it is presented, women are able to employ a diverse set of strategies that range from the daily chores to seasonal adaptations. Their work shows a complex knowledge of the land and resource management through the various tactics they use to maintain a livelihood. Sontheimer's (1991) book, *Women and the Environment* provides an in depth look at other uses of forests outside the daily gathering done by women. These uses include wood for structures, small house maintenance tasks and even income for women who know how to make products out of the tree's resources that they can sell.

Targets of Development

Just as the forests are an important part of Kumaoni life and livelihood, they are also the target and lure of development in Kumaon (Shiva 1989). Colonists interest in the forests was in commodifying and exporting the resources they provided; "They displaced local rights, local needs and local knowledge and reduced this primary source of life into a timber mine" (Shiva 1989: 61). Colonists set up timber mines by hiring lumber workers to extract resources from the forests. The resources were then used for exportation and monetary gain. By commodifying forest resources, colonists not only removed an important source of livelihood for Kumaoni people but also began to implement the economic views associated with a Western form of subsistence. As a result, timber and forest products were seen in two juxtaposing ways: as subsistence

resources and commodities that produce cash. Shiva (1989) illustrates the tensions present through the various ways that the forests are used for development versus livelihood. Lumber workers in the timber industry earn their income from cutting the trees and hence are supporting their own livelihood. The income they earn is what allows them to provide necessities for their families. However, for Kumaoni women, the living forest, uncut, is what produces their food and livelihood. Without the forest resources, Kumaoni people must find other ways to survive.

Women's work encourages the life and reproduction of the forests. By clearing out dead brush and pruning the trees they support the natural cycles of the forest. The components of life that make up the resources collected by women are of no use to foresters or lumber workers in Kumaon (Shiva 1989). Their interest is solely in the timber that is mined. The disinterest in the subsistence resources, however, has yet to create a cooperative or sharing relationship between Kumaoni women and loggers. Instead, Shiva explains, the unneeded forest products that women use for their livelihood are considered waste by loggers and go unused.

In the next section, current development practices in Kumaon will be considered as an outgrowth of previous colonial practices and policies. First I summarize the construction of development as an industry generally as well as the various ways that it is implemented in India and Kumaon specifically. I then speak to the ways that contemporary development institutions have built policies and projects from a colonial-based social organization. Looking specifically at the dichotomy between forest resources as a commodity versus a provision of subsistence, I address the effects that development has had on Kumaoni women.

The Construction of Development in the Third World

In this section I first look at the formation of the “Third World” as characterized by colonialism and development. I then explore the origins and establishment of development in those described ‘Third World’ countries. After looking at its foundation, I explore the various manifestations of development and the implied necessity in Third World areas such as Kumaon.

The “Third World” was originally a political term relating to countries that were originally not associated with the Western First World or the Eastern Second World (Charlton 1997). However, now the Third World is considered an economic term for those countries that are underdeveloped by First World definitions. Escobar (1988) explores the creation of the Third World in the described context of underdevelopment. He looks specifically at the correlation it has with international institutions being established to fund development in a given country. At the same time that the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were established in 1944, the ‘Third World’ was given its economic meaning (Charlton 1997; Escobar 1988). This economic significance helped in “determining whether development occurs, how it occurs and who benefits from it” (Charlton 1997: 9). By creating an economic ranking of countries, international institutions are able to gain political and economic power within Third World countries, based on their ability to decide how and where to distribute funds.

Escobar’s (1988) study however, also challenges the implications of such a ranking system. Because a select few people define the ‘Third World,’ the category is flawed in assuming that one economic position is more important (or has more authority)

than another. The next section addresses how this authority is established and by what means development is then put in place.

Various Influences on the Foundation of Development

It is difficult to identify a single influence on the initial implementation of development projects. Generalizations about the need for development often leave out the background of the events that lead up to developmental policies. A reason that it is difficult to identify a driving force of development is that, “conceptualizations of development reflect historical experience and individual values” (Charlton 1997: 7). There are a number of people involved in the creation of development projects from the developers themselves to the people of the particular country. With so many ideas about what is best for the people of a particular place, it becomes blurry where the need for development arose.

Historically, colonial efforts laid the groundwork for development projects and control in underdeveloped nations (Charlton 1997). There are two ways that colonialism influenced current development: control over governmental policies and education. The control exhibited by colonial influences set the stage for development projects to be set in third world countries. Charlton argues that because colonialists controlled governmental structures, development projects that controlled the government were not considerably resisted. In addition to this non-resistance is the situation that colonial laws and policies set in place in the 1800’s through mid-1900 were not removed in the post-colonial era. This means that even after the colonial regimes were gone, the policies were in place and

continually executed by officials who were trained under colonial governments (Charlton 1997; Gururani 2002b).

Policies and social structures were not the only ways that colonial influence remained, aiding in development implementation. Education was also a key factor in the compliance and agreement of the people; however, changing educational structures was forced much like policies and social constructions of this era. Charlton argues that the organization and substance of education during colonial times forcefully taught future leaders of Third World countries to understand the western systems and believe that they were right for their country. By educating future Third World leaders in “western values, ideologies (whether liberal-democratic, socialist or communist) and organizational habits” (Charlton 1997: 11), Western ideologies would be maintained and the influence of western civilization by way of development projects would be guaranteed when the time came in the late 1900’s.

Though colonization was a big influence in the establishment of development in the Third World, industrialization and political shuffling following World War II also played an important role. When nations were reestablishing themselves following the war, the term “underdeveloped” surfaced along with the idea of the “Third World” (Escobar 1988). Underdevelopment allowed the advanced countries like the United States to find ways to establish economic influence in countries that need assistance. The Marshall Plan was one such manifestation of influence that created a plan for reconstruction of nations following the War. By establishing a presence in Third World countries and aiding in reconstruction of war-depleted areas, development became the economic means for First World countries to begin their presence in the areas (Escobar

1988). By gaining control of the Third World, First World countries were able to have a hand in policy construction and resource extraction to their own countries.

The combination of all these factors (colonial policy, education, and industrialization) is what established initial development in the Third World. Escobar illustrates that “the poor countries became the target of an endless number of programs and interventions that seemed to be inescapable and that ensured their [developmental] control” (1988: 430). Once development was seen as a way to control, improve, and ‘help’ Third World countries in addition to extracting resources for their own needs, the ongoing improvement plans appeared to have no end.

The social systems and livelihoods of people were the focus of projects, albeit with ulterior motives to gain more control of the people. Experts who coordinated projects continued to construct new programs once the previous were finished. This continuous implementation allowed development institutions to maintain a presence in the Third World long after their initial plans for development were through. The next section details the way experts became part of the organizations that administer development and the ways that the need for such an industry was created. I then look at the direct influence of development in Kumaon and the ways that development is currently established.

The Industry of Development and Construction of Projects

The people involved in creating development projects study both the need and the means by which to make changes in a given country. The project practitioners provide information about the background of a country’s social, political and cultural makeup.

Escobar (1988) notes that by studying the social systems of the people and analyzing their need for development, the organization of development studies created a need for professionals in the field of social and political development.

The industry of development then resulted from the institutionalization and professionalization of the knowledge that these experts held in studying a given population or process (Escobar 1988). Economists, sociologists, geographers, anthropologists and political scientists are among a few of the professional fields that make up the core of the development industry. The professionals are often from First World countries and many of their studies are based on their understanding of how the Third World works in comparison to the First World.

Escobar notes that these professionals are responsible for understanding a Third World country's political and social constructions; how they are governed, what sorts of divisions of labor are used, how do they maintain their livelihood. In addition to reviewing the political and social formations, they also address a country's particular need for development. After identifying the perceived needs of Third World countries, the development industry studies how proposed projects can and should be implemented and maintained (Escobar 1988). Escobar's research critiques the ways that development industries have created a presence and standing authority in countries with the impression of improving their world economic standing. Their interests are economic while their intentions, though supportive on the surface, are more subtly founded in control and authority over the Third World and their own economic gains.

To contextualize this concept, I look specifically at Kumaon and contemporary development projects. Kumaon is a rural agrarian and forest-supported society that was

historically sustained by subsistence gathering and agriculture. Presently Kumaon is sustained by a combination of subsistence and economic strategies (Gururani 2002a). The various resources available from the forests, fields and animal husbandry all support subsistence production for the people. As noted previously, men and women participated in complimentary tasks prior to colonialism in order to maintain a subsistence livelihood. This division of labor changed when the Gorkha rulers of Nepal forced men into begar practices that established an unpaid labor system. Following Gorkha rule, colonists exacerbated the begar practices, forcing men out of the villages and into the cities. While working in the cities, colonists integrated men into the capitalist system, where they would shift from subsistence production to wage labor. While men and women work in these two diversified realms of subsistence, their livelihood is constantly changing with development projects that restrict use of certain forestland or build roads for faster and widespread transportation. Such projects hinder the work of men and women alike (Klenk 2004). By looking at the construction of development projects in Kumaon, I illuminate the invisible gap between community ideologies and development initiatives.

In Kumaon, development projects include an array of public transportation and road building incentives that establish a system of connections between neighboring villages (Mehta 1996). Though these projects reflect an increase in the communication possibilities and resource sharing abilities among local villages and beyond, the development interests do not acknowledge the problematic situation faced by women who, as a result, experience decreased visibility and importance both culturally and politically.

These projects allow for faster and more efficient transportation abilities in traveling to and from the cities. By making urban areas more available through interconnecting roads, migration to cities becomes more possible (Mehta 1996). Because migratory work is generally gendered, the transportation systems are in effect gendered as well. Men are more readily able to find work in the cities because their ability to get to the cities is increased. This system, however, has an important effect on women's work and the additional adaptations they are expected to make because of this increased transportation and communication system.

With more transportation possibilities, market vendors have the ability to obtain a variety of crops from outlying areas. Their ability to move and distribute resources between villages is increased through the construction of these roads. Because women always relied on their own ability to gather their daily necessities, earning an income was not a necessity. However, with well-stocked markets offering the variety of products that women would otherwise gather, there is a new incentive to earn an income, allowing women to purchase their daily necessities rather than physically working for them (Mehta 1996). Although cash cropping is a potential solution to this issue, the men in the family focused on the maintenance of cash crops, preventing women from earning an income in that way.

The next section looks at the language in the construction of development projects and how that language organizes the allocation of resources within developing countries.

Institutional Framework and Construction of Ideologies

Through the institutionalization of knowledge presented by professionals in the development industry, Escobar studies how the knowledge begins to take on a specialized and exclusive tendency. By keeping the knowledge within a specific position and field, development industries maintain control of who can participate and contribute to development projects. The way that they gain this control is through the language that frames development projects. By using specialized language unique to a particular field of study, development practitioners and development industries are able to establish an institutional discourse that claims credibility and organizes social relations, planning for the allocation of resources for projects in the Third World, or developing areas (Escobar 1988).

Escobar's research criticizes the consequences of the development industry's claim to credible knowledge, which is reflected in their projects. He addresses the generalizations inherently present in the process and the ways that specializing knowledge tends to generalize other more specific aspects of a given group of people or process. In particular, the "material and cultural relations of different people" (Escobar 1988: 438) are not completely considered in the process of creating a project for a specific area. In glazing over some of the particulars of a given society, the development discourse is not reliable as a source of actual developmental need.

Many writers have analyzed the discourse of the development industry and provided an alternative look at the constructions, categories and ideologies present in looking at developmental interests. Many of their findings have revealed that the discourse relevant to development is gendered. By creating projects that are gendered in

nature, women's perceptions of development and themselves is consequently affected because categories define them as irrelevant and not having the 'right' knowledge. Due to the fact that men typically run the development institutions and even Third World governments, women's participation and influence is rarely acknowledged (Charlton 1997). The ongoing effect of this arrangement is that women are systematically rendered invisible and undervalued.

The continual invisibility of women is not just a matter of development discourse. In fact, it can also be linked to the colonial construction of social systems wherein the dynamics of male versus female work and knowledge were identified as inherently unequal. Colonial ideologies link specific tasks with typically 'male' and 'female' roles as administered by the British Empire (Charlton 1997; Snyder and Tadesse 1997). Their ideology that women belong in the home and men should be earning an income is the reason colonial ideologies were focused on men and helping them understand technology, economic living, and the importance of earning cash income (Snyder and Tadesse 1997). On the other hand, "female instruction was largely religious and oriented toward helping girls become better mothers and housewives (in the European sense)" (Charlton 1997: 10).

The tendency to focus colonial efforts on men had the effect of increasing female poverty through a series of cultural alterations that left women in the shadows of their male counterparts (Sen and Grown 1987). One such alteration includes more time spent in household work, which affected women's ability to earn an income. Because women did not provide income for their families, male-run governments did not consider them as a valuable resource, leaving women with little authority regarding family or community

affairs. Colonial assumptions created a greater gap in the division of labor that was not present in most Third World countries prior to colonialism (Charlton 1997; Snyder and Tadesse 1997; Sen and Grown 1987). Their belief that women are an inconsequential source of information leads to a focus on information and knowledge that was provided by men in a given community. This impacted women's political and familial status, as they were not given any ability to participate in either community or politically oriented decisions. Particularly in Kumaon current development ideology constructs projects based on male needs, leaving women to make adjustments and remain in the shadows.

Much in the same way that Escobar (1988) critiques the dominant constructions of the 'Third World', Mohanty (1997) critiques the discourse of western feminists regarding the construction of women as a category in developing areas. Some Western feminists constructed women in the Third World as an all-encompassing category and "characterized as a singular group on the basis of shared oppression" (Mohanty 1997: 81). This deterministic characterization forces women into a narrow, limiting definition that fails to acknowledge the differences in class, race or ethnicity. Mohanty argues that this construction of women by some western feminists assumes universality to the category of women. By similarly placing women into a homogenous category despite inherent differences, development industries are able to overlook the specific interests of the diverse women, in part, making their needs invisible.

For many women, the generalizations present in development ideologies ignore the lived realities and experiences of their lives. This forces women to be hidden and homogenized, leaving their lives reshaped and redefined by the institutional framework of the development industry (Mueller 1995). Mueller's study of 'Women in Peru'

explores how women's realities and needs are not acknowledged by the development industry. By categorizing women without taking into account their differences, Mueller shows how women are rendered invisible. Mueller's research raises important issues relevant to the situation Kumaoni women face in the context of development projects. Kumaoni women's need to use and access forest resources is not recognized in the development projects that restrict local access to the forest areas. Just like Peruvian women in Mueller's research, Indian women are overlooked and the authority over their power and position in society goes directly to men. Without political or social importance, Kumaoni women are left to adjust to the changing policies that limit their forest access and resource availability.

In current Kumaoni culture, there is a dichotomy where nature and culture are seen as opposing forces (Agarwal 1997). This dichotomy is then played out in the social categorization present through colonialism and the development industry where women have an inherent connection with nature and men with culture. The restriction of nature, or the forests in the case of Kumaon, is then accepted as part of the inferior state of nature in comparison to culture. This value that is placed on culture translates to the greater importance of wage labor over a subsistence livelihood. Shiva (1997) and Agarwal (1997) explain this dichotomy as being rooted in the patriarchal assumptions of Kumaoni culture. Because Kumaon traditionally was structured under patriarchal systems, men are assumed to have more authority and presence over women. This is also true of governmental structures, which are predominantly run by men (Charlton 1997).

From another angle, Rebecca Klenk (2004) interviews Kumaoni women in an attempt to understand their interpretations of the goals and projects of development.

Klenk found the diverse perspectives of the group to be inconsistent with the development industry's category of women as a homogenous group. She notes that their differences varied even in the languages they spoke—Kumaoni, Garhwali and Hindi. Klenk also found their perspectives on development very disparate despite their invariable geographic location. In her study Klenk found a wide variety of responses regarding ways to fix development, illuminating the varied understanding the women had and their diverse needs from development projects.

An important part of Klenk's (2004) study highlights the meanings associated with the term 'development' or 'developed'. The researchers found that the women could not define a 'developed woman' but they did identify 'her' as inherently good. Klenk's researchers found this surprising because development in Kumaon often left women and their working environment in a dismal state. However, this belief of the Kumaoni situation was not consistent with the women's self-image. They did not align themselves "as overworked women inhabiting a deteriorating environment" (Klenk 2004: 68); instead they saw themselves as poor and lacking income. The solution that the women reached during their time with Klenk's researchers was that if they could adopt new technologies for resource management, they might save time allowing them to earn an income of some sort. This shift toward economic interest is consistent both with colonial concepts and the present development framework. Both systems have altered the lived traditions of the people, creating an increased dependency and desire for income-based work in comparison to a subsistence livelihood.

In the next section I explore the various ways that women's work is constructed both through development projects and as a response to development. It will also establish the effects of development on gendered labor practices in Kumaon specifically.

Work and Knowledge in Developing Areas

Development industries create programs and projects with the intent of affecting the lives of men (Charlton 1997) but often justify their program implementation on people's poverty. The effects of these projects are the changes in the lives of women. When men re-allocate their labor outside household and subsistence activities, remaining members of the family must make up their workload—namely, women.

In looking at the historical construction of Kumaoni social institutions, it is important to acknowledge the classic patriarchal systems that drive the definitions of male and female roles in a given society. Patriarchy creates what Mehta considers the “etiquette of public invisibility” (1996: 190) for women. In Indian culture, women are expected to remain in the shadows of public life, invisible to those around them; their work, presence and opinions are never to be seen or heard. However, this is more difficult for women in Kumaon because they work in the forests and fields on a daily basis, which requires them to be outdoors where community members can see them all day long.

Though women are not able to follow a traditional private presence in Kumaon, they are rendered invisible in other more subtle ways. Pre-colonial Kumaoni society placed a great importance on the forests and the resources that they provide. Men and women worked together to collect the daily necessities of the family livelihood.

However, following colonial governance and developmentalist projects, care of the forests became less important for men. In fact, wage labor opportunities and commodification began to take precedence over forest management at this time. In the early 1900's, men were pushed by policies and taught to see the forests as a source of monetary gain rather than a resource of subsistence. During this same time, women continued to work under the scrutiny of men who viewed women as less valuable when they did not earn an income. In this way, the traditional division of labor was exchanged for new 'traditions', which shifted labor practices and left women burdened with the responsibility of all housework and subsistence work and no political or social standing (Gupte 2004; Gururani 2002a; Shiva 1989; Upadhyay 2005). The new 'traditions' are the set of practices adopted by the community as their own social construction or the understanding that these new practices are part of their historical culture. This ideology becomes important as development institutions interpret these as actual 'tradition'.

Women's work under current 'traditional' practices consists of the various gathering necessities in forests as well as farming and raising the livestock. Their work is generally unpaid, unless they can find creative ways to sell forest resources and products (Sontheimer 1991). In the maintenance of the household, women carry the majority of the knowledge regarding forest management and reproduction. The work they do creates a partnership between Kumaoni culture and their location in forestland (Shiva 1989). Women's work is largely based on providing their households' subsistence needs, however, because they are often gathering and working together, their work becomes an important aspect of their social identity as well.

Women's "work in the forests (or agricultural fields) serves as a cultural index by which women's worth, social identity and relationships are constructed" (Gururani 2002a: 237). Their work in the forest then serves two purposes-- subsistence and social. In working and spending considerable time together, Gururani (2002a) illustrates the ways in which women have constructed their time working as a social outlet. While working in the forests, she describes a separation of social groups; mostly divided by age, women are able to speak freely amongst peers, share stories and converse about their daily-lived experiences (Gururani 2002a). With a need to maintain their family's wellbeing, women use their experience and the experience of those around them to expand their resources and knowledge to better understand the work they do.

Particularly for new wives under the pressure of their mothers-in-law, the social networks are an important form of support in the hardest times. Because Kumaon is a patrilineal society, the mother of the husband has more authority over the new wife. Gururani (2002a) explores the patrilocal systems of Kumaon by looking at what happens when a woman is married and joins the family of her husband. The role social networks play, are an important part of the support new wives need. As an outside member of the family, the new wife must prove herself to her mother-in-law. The relationship between the mother-in-law and the new wife is often a very stressful and grueling at the early stages of the new wife's arrival to her husband's family. In a situation like this, the new wives call on the support of their peers to get through the initial period of entering a new family.

This social facet of their work is important in acknowledging the information shared and passed on through the women. Gururani's study found that women used their

time in the forests as a time to teach, learn and socialize with other women in addition to the gathering of resources. The knowledge passed from generation to generation and through social networks displays the way that knowledge of forest work is maintained (Gururani 2002a). Bina Agarwal (1997) describes this process as the means by which women are able to gain so much specialized knowledge of forestry and forest management. The area-specific knowledge that women have in Kumaon is starting to gain importance despite their hesitancy to admit that they have the needed information. Certain governmental organizations and activists groups are taking note of the destruction of forestland and the positive correlation it has to the restrictions placed on local people, women in particular. While women are not allowed to gather or care for the forests, forests are being destroyed and quickly being depleted of their livelihood.

Gupte (2004) argues that women's daily involvement in forest maintenance and care is what gives them the knowledge and understanding that policy makers would need in order to make informed decisions for the care and regeneration of the forests. However, Gupte also argues that their social standing within the society may hinder their capability of making a contribution to such policies. Women's opinions are rarely considered and their involvement seldom permitted within community and social situations where major decisions are made (Gupte 2004). The next section addresses how women's knowledge is being uncovered, through analyzing their social position, in an effort to reconstruct the dying forestland of Kumaon.

The Role of Knowledge in Kumaoni Environmental Regeneration

The nature of development projects focus on the commodification and gains of resource exporting. The incorporation of indigenous knowledge and particularly the knowledge of women, who spend considerable time in the forests, is not often incorporated into the actual language of the project plans (Gururani 2002b). It is only recently (1990's) that "research organizations and non-governmental organizations are working to map traditional knowledge" (Gururani 2002b: 313). The reason for this project is the growing conflict over the commodification of forests and forest resources and the corresponding loss of forestland and knowledge associated with forest maintenance. The organizations mapping this information are realizing that women of traditional cultures like Kumaon, bear the environmental knowledge needed to reestablish forestlands like those in the Himalayas, which have been destroyed by development projects such as roads in addition to the logging that is clear-cutting the area.

The reason that women are the targets of this information gathering is because their knowledge is localized and specific to the particular areas. They carry the information of the vegetation within the forests and the ways to sustain the life (Gururani 2002b). However, researchers are facing one problem with the gathering of women's knowledge—women do not consider themselves knowledgeable on the subjects of resource management or forest rehabilitation. The bulk of Gururani's (2002b) study explores "how knowledge is shared and circulated and what the relationship is between women and men's knowledge" (315). An important finding in her study identifies the various outside influences on the production, and even implementation, of knowledge that are not as significant as the social power relations present in society.

In Kumaoni villages, men are often gone earning an income in the cities and women are the only ones left in the villages. When men leave they spend weeks away before returning home for a short period of time to make sure their home is still in working order. Despite outnumbering male authorities, women still follow hierarchical systems and are instructed by men in the ways of forest management and gathering techniques (Gururani 2002b). This assumed lack of knowledge creates a sense of insecurity for women who respond by incorporating male perspectives and knowledge into their daily work. Women's insecurity was also reflected in the interviews conducted by Gururani who noted that women avoided her questions or directed her to the men of the village for information instead of answering the questions themselves. In taking a different approach, Gururani asked more direct questions about where women got their knowledge. What she found was more telling than any knowledge that textbooks or men could provide. The women responded saying, ““We just know, it's not written anywhere, we go to the forest, somebody says this is good, we remember or we ask someone who knows about it, we just know”” (Gururani 2002b: 317). Much in the same way that Agarwal (1997), Gururani (2002a), and Shiva (1989) refer to the passing of knowledge between generations of women, Gururani's (2002b) findings confirm this reliance on the information imparted from one woman to another orally.

Women's lack of understanding regarding their own knowledge runs over into their political and community involvement. Gupte (2004) acknowledges that this situation may be beyond women's control due to the historical, traditional and political disadvantages that face women. Women's social standing—as subordinate to men—hinders their ability to fully participate in policy or decision-making processes. In fact,

she states, “it is imperative to realize the effect of culturally determined processes of exclusion on policy-making” (Gupte 2004). The cultural processes are the ways in which traditional social structures not only render women invisible but also invaluable in the realm of providing knowledge (Agarwal 2001).

Cultural invisibility and social constraints are not the only ways women are restricted from community involvement regarding environmental decisions; their work load often requires a full day in the forests and fields (Agarwal 2001). These long working days mean that women scarcely have the time needed to participate in meetings in addition to their field and forest work. The result of this gendered participation in community affairs creates a male-bias and gendered presence to the creation of policies.

Another, more current, cultural barrier facing women is the growing importance of the monetary exchange in Kumaoni society. Because women’s work is generally unpaid, their importance in an economically driven system is considerably devalued (Agarwal 2001). In addition, the unequal distribution of wealth within a family often directly and negatively affects women and, many times, children. It is not a rare occurrence that men will use the money they earn for their own needs and desires instead of contributing to the family livelihood (Agarwal 2001).

Agarwal challenges the work of Shiva (1989) and others, saying that they assume only women to have the proper knowledge, but they offer no concrete solutions for women to achieve a more equal position in the community and more specifically, the family. Agarwal (2001) highlights the many ways in which women are excluded from policy-making committees within the villages and governmental structures. First, in forming community groups, only one member of each household is allowed to join;

therefore, the male being the head of the household, naturally takes the position.

Secondly, many meetings are called during the day, a time that women would be working on the family chores and responsibilities. This can be linked to Farooquee and Rawat's (2001) suggestion that decreasing women's responsibilities would give them more time and opportunity to take part in community decisions. Third, Agarwal (2001) observes the lack of female involvement based on a system of male-bias. This belief comes from her findings that women feel slighted by men. For example, in the few instances that women are allowed to give their opinions, Agarwal notes that the men check with other men before accepting the information as reliable. If there is any question, the male opinion is the one that is taken for fact. Many times, this disrespect causes women to give up and remove themselves from the decision-making situations (Agarwal, 2001).

Gururani (2002b) found that women were only able to get their opinions and knowledge in the discussion circles when talking to male family members or subtly discussing problems with male members of their villages. In this way, Gururani notes that women have some influence on the project planning but for the most part, male authority dominates their social standing in Kumaoni society.

Conclusion:

As it has been noted, through colonial and developmental changes, the traditions of gendered work in Kumaon, India have been drastically altered in contemporary times. The presence of an authoritarian colonial government and the policies implemented during that era have, in effect, created a new social organization and additional political developments in the region. Development institutions as well have established new

working and labor systems that add to colonial alterations of traditions in Kumaon.

Women in particular have seen and felt the effect of the changing social systems in ways that render their work and knowledge invisible regarding particularly their subsistence production. Through forest restrictions and cultural barriers such as patriarchal organizations and large workloads, the women are pushed out of public vision and left to adapt to any new systems established without an ability to participate in or voice how they are being affected.

The current organization of work in Kumaon represents not a tradition of long kept cultural practices, but a modification of work trends that arose through a transformative period of colonialism and have recently become fairly pervasive throughout Kumaoni society. In making changes and altering society, colonists' created gendered work patterns that left women working alone to maintain the family's livelihood. This feminization of work is a result of forced labor that pulled men out of the villages and into wage labor through systems of outmigration in accordance with *begar* practices.

The inherent and invisible connections between women's work, colonization and development are all present in Kumaon society and function to create this false 'tradition' that now organizes current gendered relations of work. As policies restricted the traditional resources of livelihood, Kumaoni men and women have taken on a diversified set of strategies for subsistence production needed to maintain the family. With the current combination of economic and subsistence livelihoods, Kumaoni social organizations have created a dichotomy between nature and culture. Men are associated

with economic livelihoods and culture, while women are connected to nature and subsistence production.

Men and women have established specific adaptations to subsistence production that contribute to the dichotomy between economic and subsistence livelihoods. Men have gained experience in earning a cash income and have learned to rely on that source of livelihood as an important part of their family work. With their cash source, men participate in capitalist social systems by purchasing resources instead of gathering them. In contrast, women have maintained the subsistence livelihood while enduring new pressures that push them to earn an income, which would enable them to purchase their daily necessities. Because men have adopted Western ideologies that rank women as subordinate and naïve to their authority and knowledge, colonial and development ideologies have been forced on women through their fathers, brothers and husbands. This nuanced way of controlling the people, through social organizations, allows development institutions to not only control men, but indirectly control women as well. With these new ideologies in place, the organization of political policies often overlooks women's traditional and indigenous knowledge and relies solely on the male understanding of a particular subject, which is often Westernized and consistent with the development industry's goals and strategies.

Recently, development institutions have created policies and projects that serve to heighten their access and control of resources and economic systems in Third World countries like India. Under the pretense that their work is mainly in support of a country's development, the nuances of development discourse allow these institutions to control the allocation of resources and determine where and how projects will be

implemented. Their control then limits the country's ability to gain independent power because they become reliant on resources provided by development institutions. For development institutions, the controlling power encourages them to remain involved in projects and policies by limiting the power of indigenous people.

The combination of new 'traditions' and developmental strategies for hegemony has created a cycle, deteriorating women's knowledge and discontinuing their ability to maintain forests in Kumaon. As a result, the forestland has been depleted of a lot of its resource base. In response, non-governmental organizations and activist groups are beginning to take interest in reestablishing women's knowledge and understanding of forest maintenance. Their goals, though admirable, have been difficult to reach because of the male-bias that has been engrained in women's understanding of their own knowledge. By addressing specifically the role of women in current Kumaoni culture, my hope is that this research will contribute to the growing body of research looking to illuminate the importance of the feminization of labor within rural Indian communities.

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